

Spencer Museum of Art | The University of Kansas

1301 Mississippi
Lawrence, KS 66045

WEBSITE CONSULTANT

SOLICITATION NUMBER: L100120009

SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

The University of Kansas (KU) through its Spencer Museum of Art (SMA), with support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, seeks to enlist a web development and design agency to assess its existing digital resources and guide staff in creating a new website structure and design that unifies the SMA’s multiple websites and applications to improve individual user discoverability and access to all its digital resources.

This RFP is open to freelance consultants and agencies to provide guidance for the information architecture, navigation, and integration of the SMA’s multiple web-based platforms into an intuitive, user-experience-based interface that unites all of the Museum’s digital educational resources. The primary deliverable for this project is a comprehensive plan for a redesigned and unified website, including:

- content design and information architecture,
- user experience and design recommendations,
- opportunities for improved accessibility for users of different abilities,
- recommend ways to improve visual messaging across the site for greater inclusivity, and
- technical guidance for unifying multiple platforms.

The final design plan will support the SMA’s equity goals by recommending ways to improve accessibility across the site for users with differing abilities, including people with visual impairments and hearing impairments, and guidance on how the SMA can convey itself as a welcoming and inclusive space to communities of all backgrounds through images and other visual messaging site-wide. Successful candidates will have experience with user-centered design, information and content architecture, and digital accessibility. This contract can be fully remote or a blend of remote and in-person consultation.

RFP ANNOUNCED: September 27, 2021

RESPONSES DUE: October 25, 2021

PERIOD OF CONTRACT: December 1, 2021 to October 31, 2022

BUDGET: \$80,000

QUESTIONS: For questions please contact Carla Swoyer, cswoyer@ku.edu.

ABOUT THE SPENCER MUSEUM OF ART

Located on the University of Kansas Lawrence campus, the Spencer Museum of Art's founding collections were donated in 1917 by collector Sallie Casey Thayer. The SMA's collection now exceeds 45,000 objects with contemporary and historic artwork in all mediums from cultures across six continents. The SMA's galleries offer a dynamic classroom for students at KU, K–12 students across Kansas, and lifelong learners.

Foremost among the many communities of learners who depend on the SMA's resources for meaningful experiences with art and ideas are faculty and students at KU. The SMA serves as an alternative classroom and integrates its diverse collection into the curriculum through customized viewing experiences in its object study center, installations co-curated with faculty, co-curricular programming, and more. In 2019 (pre-pandemic), the SMA directly engaged 1 out of every 3 KU students, including 98% of incoming freshmen. The SMA also serves KU's research community directly through student and faculty fellowships, as well as engaging in deeper, longer-range research commitments through annual inquiry exhibitions, programs, scholarly publications, colloquia, and visiting artists and scholars. School teachers from 29 districts across Kansas and Missouri integrated the SMA's collection into their teaching in 2019, and more than 2,600 K–12 students visited the galleries as part of school tours. In addition to university and K–12 students, the SMA is a source of education, socialization, and stimulation for lifelong learners. Older adults who value free programs and opportunities for discussion with staff and other visitors represent a large segment of the SMA's audiences.

STATE OF DIGITAL PRESENCE

The SMA has a robust digital infrastructure. Currently, the SMA operates digitally across various platforms, including a visitor-focused website (www.spencerart.ku.edu), which uses the Drupal (current 8 but will upgrade to 9 this fall) content management system, and separate site (www.spencerartapps.ku.edu), that hosts several custom-built web-based applications, which use React. The Spencer Art Apps include the Collection Search, Curricular Resources Database, K–12 Lesson Plans, and Collection Mapping. Spencer Art Apps are built on two APIs that draw from the SMA's internal MuseumPlus database. In addition, the SMA maintains a few single-purpose websites that support K-12 initiatives, such as our docent program and educators across Kansas. With increased user engagement of online resources due to COVID-19, structural challenges across the sites have been accentuated. Weaknesses in how audiences navigate a wealth of material across multiple platforms, as well as barriers to rapidly developing new web content, have accelerated the SMA's desire to improve its website's information architecture.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

With increasing reliance on its web platforms for educational, research, and community engagement, the SMA plans to redevelop its digital presence and content design architecture to 1) increase content discoverability and exploration for its many communities of learners, 2) improve accessibility of content, 3) deliver a consistent visual message that makes all audiences feel welcome and represented; and 4) consolidate digital resources into a unified platform.

The consultant or agency hired through this RFP will help the SMA achieve its goals by developing a detailed plan for how to successfully unify its existing digital resources into a more intuitive, accessible, welcoming, and user-driven site. The SMA's extensive digital content and research centered on its 45,000+ works of art must be readily findable and usable by target audiences, necessitating a new

hierarchical organization schema. The plan for the redesigned site must also consider room for growth and the ongoing creation and integration of future digital resources. The latter might entail recommendations on continued curation of the Museum's website, strategies for integrating new content and resources, and guidance on making decisions about when to retire content.

Please note, the Museum will complete the unification and redesign of its websites in-house, and that work is outside the scope of this contract. Accordingly, programming standards and softwares established and supported by KU Information Technology should be taken into account when providing recommendations.

By rethinking and reorganizing its digital resources, the SMA aims to elevate the online learning experience for all audiences, including the KU community, K–12 students and educators, and all learners. The SMA's methods of integrating resources will offer a model to peer institutions and support the adoption of audience-driven digital and accessible resources.

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The consultant will:

- Provide a sitemap for the next generation of the SMA's website, including incorporation of the current suite of Spencer Art Apps and other online resources;
- Deliver recommendations for user-experience-based design based on content design architecture;
- Identify opportunities for improving accessibility of site content for users of varying abilities;
- Recommend strategies for more inclusive visual imagery and messaging across the site;
- Advise on content creation workflows that can be completed without reliance on web programming staff;
- Provide direction on how to create a single search of all content and platforms and display the results within design recommendations;
- Incorporate into the content design architecture recommendations of linking the SMA's collection database to the site in order to create data entry efficiencies;
- Advise on the unification of the SMA's multiple existing web platforms, both in functionality and design, in collaboration with the SMA's technical staff;
- Commit to the duration of the project and provide guidance through conversations with smaller groups or individuals.

Project Deliverables:

- Site map and navigation recommendations;
- Information hierarchy for page structure;
- Top-level user-experience design recommendations;
- List of accessibility improvements that can be made during the programming of the new site;
- Proposed user behavior paths to ensure easy access to all SMA resources;
- Proposed new information architecture and programming infrastructure that supports fully leveraging the museum's internal collections database, MuseumPlus.

BUDGET DETAILS

The budget for this project is \$80,000.

RESPONDENTS' REQUIREMENTS

Applicants are encouraged to review the SMA's current websites www.spencerart.ku.edu and www.spencerartapps.ku.edu, as well as the [SMA Strategic Plan](#) and [Comprehensive Interpretive Plan](#) in advance of submitting a proposal.

- **Background Information.** A cover letter or executive summary with the name, contact information, brief history, and description of the agency or individual applying. Include resumes or bios of those who will be providing services. The University of Kansas, Spencer Museum of Art is an equal opportunity employer and encourages responses from minority- and women-owned business enterprises, veteran-owned business enterprises, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender-owned enterprises, and disability-owned business enterprises. If you/your agency's ownership represents one or more of the above, please note it in your proposal.
- **Your Experience in Providing the Services and Examples.** Describe your experience or the experience of your agency and its consultants in providing similar services to those requested here, including re-designing websites with vast amounts of content and user-experience design. Further, describe demonstrated outcomes as a result of past work performed in client organizations. Please share at least two relevant examples of your work, including links and a description of work provided.
- **Additional Experience.** Describe your understanding of accessibility aspects of web design, your experience developing sites for diverse communities, your knowledge of the latest directions in inclusive and equitable web design, and any other relevant experience or qualifications related to the proposed activities.
- **Approach and Timeline.** Provide a description of the approach you/your agency uses when consulting with organizations on website design and a projected timeline. Tell us what you believe is most critical to your practice. How would you tailor your approach for the Spencer Museum of Art and for the remote nature of work during Covid-19?
- **References.** Three verifiable client references with contact information.
- **Conflicts of Interest.** Any known relationships that would or could create a conflict of interest with the Spencer Museum of Art or the University of Kansas if you were awarded a contract.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

All proposals should be submitted through the University of Kansas eBid Web Portal which can be accessed using this link: <https://kuebids.ionwave.net/Login.aspx>. Please upload your TECHNICAL PROPOSAL within the RFP online document's "RESPONSE ATTACHMENTS" Tab. For questions please contact Carla Swoyer, cswoyer@ku.edu.

QUESTIONS/ADDENDA

No pre-proposal conference is scheduled for this Solicitation. Questions requesting clarification of the Solicitation must be submitted directly to the buyer of record noted above, prior to 12:00 Noon CT on October 12, 2021. Each question or clarification should reference the appropriate Solicitation section. Failure to notify the Buyer of any conflicts or ambiguities in this Solicitation may result in resolution in

the best interest of the University. Any modification to this Solicitation shall be made in writing by addendum. Only written communications are binding.

PROJECT TIMELINE

RFP Sent: September 28, 2021

Questions Deadline: October 12, 2021 at 12:00 PM Noon, Central Time

Responses Due: October 25, 2021 at 2:00 PM Central Time

Consultant Selected: November 15, 2021

Project Start: December 1, 2021

Final Deliverables: October 31, 2022

Thank you for your interest in responding to this RFP with a proposal for a reimagined Spencer Museum of Art website to support arts education and engagement for K–12, university, and lifelong learners. We look forward to reviewing your proposal.